



**OPENING STATEMENT**

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**MEDIA CONTACTS**

Susan Phalen, Matthew Ballard

**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-NY)  
Transportation Security Subcommittee  
House Homeland Security Committee**

*Assessing TSA's Management and Implementation of the Screening Partnership Program.*

Remarks as Prepared

I would like to welcome everyone to today's hearing to assess TSA's management and implementation of the Screening Partnership Program, or SPP. I am pleased to have Jennifer Grover, the director for homeland security and justice for the Government Accountability Office, and Carolyn Dorgham, the SPP director for TSA, as our witnesses for this hearing.

Today's hearing comes at a critical time for homeland security. As we all mourn the innocent victims of the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris, Egypt and Lebanon, we must continue to pray for the victims' families and for all of the first responders who put their own lives on the line every day. America and our allies must stand together to fight ISIS, their hateful ideology, and the violence it incites.

As Chairman of both the Foreign Fighter Task Force and this Subcommittee, I am all too aware of the lengths which ISIS will go to inflict terror. We must remain vigilant, and recognize that ISIS is intent on inflicting harm on anyone who opposes their radical beliefs.

As the story behind the Russian MetroJet plane unfolds, it is clear the insider threat is real and we must take steps to mitigate it, both overseas and here at home.

Earlier this month, the San Francisco Gate reported that three screeners at San Francisco International Airport were arrested for taking money to allow drug smugglers to pass through security checkpoints with large amounts of cocaine in their baggage. In March, two other screeners at SFO were arrested and arraigned for taking bribes to allow smugglers to pass through checkpoints with methamphetamines. SFO is one of twenty-one airports in the United States that participate in the Screening Partnership program, where screening operations are run by a private contractor.

But these cases are not limited to SFO or to the privatized screening workforce. In 2012, four TSA screeners colluded with smugglers to allow drugs through check points at LAX in exchange for cash payments. When screeners are taking bribes and turning a blind eye, terrorists can exploit this vulnerability and create catastrophic consequences.

This is a systemic problem that we must deal with head on or it will only be a matter of time before we hear a story about a screener or aviation worker in the United States intentionally allowing explosives or weapons to pass through security checkpoints. TSA must step up its oversight of both the federal and private sector employees responsible for screening and other important jobs at our nation's airports. The stakes are too high not to.

The Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001 (ATSA) required TSA to conduct a pilot program to evaluate the performance of private screening at airports. The pilot was conducted from 2002 to 2004 at five airports, including Rochester airport, which is near my hometown of Syracuse. The five airports that participated in the pilot program transitioned to SPP, and since then the number of airports participating in SPP has grown to 21.

Whether there are federal workers or private contractors conducting screening at security checkpoints, we must ensure that TSA is properly overseeing this workforce and guarding against potential threats, including those emanating from the screening workforce.

We all want the best and most effective security safeguarding our nation's airports. It is also incumbent upon us to ensure that taxpayer money is being spent judiciously without sacrificing the scope or quality of security operations. However, without sufficient and reliable data from TSA, Congress is left to make important policy decisions based on assumptions rather than facts. This is not how we should be doing business.

A lack of adequate information exists to measure the success of SPP versus non-SPP screening operations almost twelve years after the implementation of the program. For over six years, GAO reports have highlighted a lack of sufficient and reliable data to compare private versus federal screener performance and cost. Today, GAO will testify on yet another report that found while TSA has made improvements to their cost estimating calculations; there are still a number of shortcomings that need to be addressed. It concerns me that TSA has failed to adequately address this issue of a transparent and accurate cost estimate over six years after concerns were initially raised.

Furthermore, the recent termination of a SPP contract agreement in western Montana only one year after the contract was awarded is troubling. It raises questions about how TSA is evaluating contractor applications prior to award and the management of the workforce transition from non-SPP to SPP.

I look forward to hearing from the GAO on what can be done to address some of these critical information gaps, and I look forward to hearing from TSA on how they plan to address this issue in an effective and timely manner. Again, thank you both for being here today.###